

Gentrification in the Short North: From Run Down to Downtown

A Senior Honors Thesis

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by

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I. The Short North: Then and Now

On the first Saturday of every month, people from all over central Ohio flock to the Short North for Gallery Hop. This short stretch of High Street, located just north of the central downtown center of Columbus, is packed with restaurants, specialty shops, and art galleries. Music, talk, and laughter fill the air as people wander from site to site, enjoying the vibrancy and life of the area. People slip into the High Street businesses, examine the art and other knick-knacks, and maybe make a purchase or two. On beautiful spring days, downtown employees eat at the restaurants and walk up and down the High Street strip. In the summer, a group of resident oddballs have a parade of insanity through the neighborhood.

In the residential neighborhoods of Victorian Village and Italian Village, located on opposite sides of High Street, there are dozens of construction projects, some recently completed, some major renovations in process, and others on the drawing board. The residents are some of the most educated and most tolerant in all of Columbus. Driving around the neighborhood, one can see all sorts of symbols of diversity: rainbow flags, American flags, Ohio State flags, and flags of the University of Michigan. All types of people are welcome in the neighborhood.

For all these positives, there are still a number of reminders of the former identity and character of the neighborhood. There are panhandlers on the street, and scantily clad women sit in a storefront window, replacing the scantily clad men, who replaced the scantily clad women. Graffiti and vandalism disfigure some buildings, but these image problems pale in comparison with the issues that afflicted the area just a few decades ago.

People who remember what the area was like in the 1970s and early 1980s find it difficult to believe they are looking at the same place. Those who were on High Street on a Saturday

night in 1970 walked along treeless sidewalks past boarded up storefronts and bars. They shared the sidewalks with drunks, prostitutes, and drug dealers. If there were suburban visitors in the area, they were probably there to patronize a lady of the night. Working class people from the residential neighborhoods imbibed in the seedy bars, and violence was a common part of life.

Many of the buildings that now house galleries and fine restaurants were home to run-down bars and other seedy establishments. The upper floors of these buildings were unutilized and property owners had no incentive to fix them up. The area did not have a name, and people without a pressing need would not go there, although it was a destination for those looking for drugs or prostitutes. Those businesses that thrived catered to the people of limited economic means in the neighborhood. There were car dealerships, used television stores, pawnshops, barbershops, and bars.

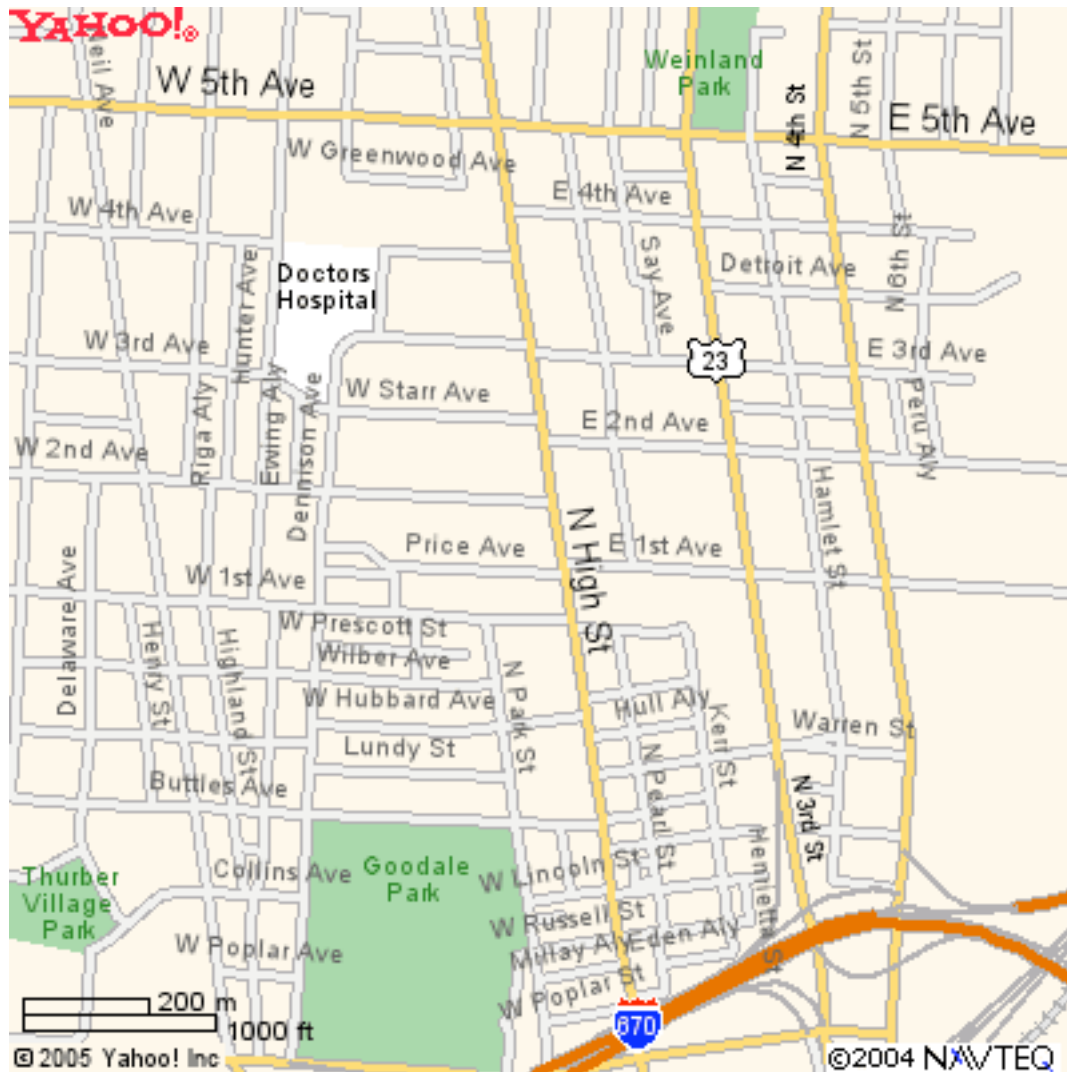
The residential neighborhoods were filled with working class families living in multi-family properties. Many of these housing units had once been single-family homes, but in the years after WWII, enterprising property owners had converted the structures into multi-unit facilities in order to increase rental income. Buildings on High Street and in the residential communities had tenants other than families and legitimate businesses. Some of these structures, especially those that were run-down or abandoned, saw illegal activities such as prostitution and drug dealing occur within their walls. The neighborhood seemed to be one without hope or much of a future, but that has changed dramatically.

The previously dangerous neighborhood is now one of the most respected and vibrant of the city. It was not a short process and it resulted in huge changes in almost every aspect of life in the area.

When one looks at the before and after snapshots of a neighborhood, it is easy to see the differences between the past and the present. However, the differences alone do not tell the story of how the neighborhood changed. This thesis examines some of the statistical evidence of gentrification in the Short North commercial strip and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. This evidence is interwoven into the story of the neighborhood as a whole. Statistics give tangible evidence that the neighborhood has changed, and stories and interviews flesh out how those changes came about. The statistics used come from the U.S. Census reports from 1960 to 2000. Further evidence comes from personal interviews conducted by the author and from newspaper articles from neighborhood and citywide periodicals. This thesis will give a more complete picture of the Short North, its change from a rough, dangerous part of Columbus to one of the most popular and well respected, and how that change came about.

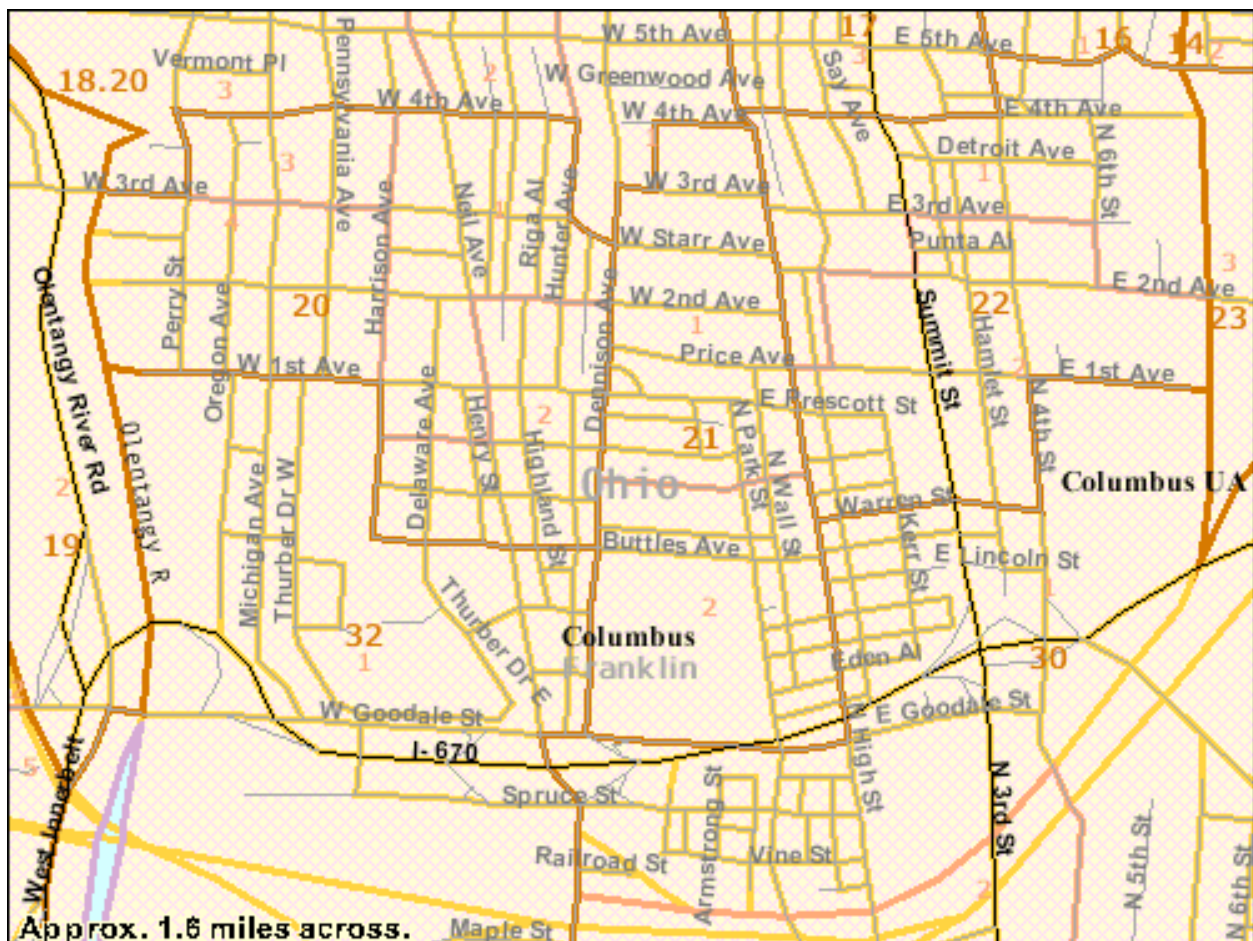
II. Important Geography

For those not familiar with Columbus, Ohio, the term “Short North” does not mean much at all. For those who know the city, there are many different ideas as to what exactly Short North refers. Police and street thugs used the term to describe an unruly stretch of High Street, but now the term refers to the principal arts and cultural district of the city (Allen interview). The Short North is officially defined as the strip of High Street running from I-670 on the south to just above 5th Avenue on the north. This section of High Street is about a mile north of the intersection of Broad Street and High Street. However, this term has come to represent not just the High Street commercial strip, but Italian Village and Victorian Village as well. All of these areas are part of the Near Northside of Columbus. The official boundaries of the Victorian



Village are High Street to the east, Harrison Avenue and Neil Avenue on the west, Fifth Avenue on the North and Goodale Avenue to the south. Italian Village mirrors Victorian Village on the east side of High Street, covering the land from High Street to N. 4th St. on the east up to 5th Avenue on the north. For the purpose of this paper, the term Short North will be used generally to refer to the Short North commercial strip, Victorian Village, and Italian Village. These three parts make up the Short North and are geographically similar, but there were major differences between them. Therefore, it is important to examine them individually and as a unified area.

To get a clear picture of many of the numerical statistics for this area, one must examine the census data. Unfortunately, the census tracts do not coincide exactly with the neighborhood definitions set out in this thesis. In order to create a standard area for examination, the author chose to look at the data for census tracts 20, 21, and 22 in Columbus, OH. These tracts cover most of the High Street commercial strip and parts of Victorian Village and Italian Village. Although not perfect, they are a good proxy for the neighborhoods at large. Furthermore, these tracts retained the same boundaries from the census of 1960 through the 2000 census.



It is important to look at the statistics for the tracts in comparison with the city at large. Otherwise, changes affecting the entire city could falsely be attributed to factors at the tract level,

i.e. gentrification could get credit for changes that simply reflect changes that affect the entire city such as improvements in education or shifts in the city economy.

This area merits special consideration and is important to study due to its historical significance to Columbus. High Street has historically been the main North-South axis for the city. The intersection of High Street and Broad Street, the city's major East-West axis, is the literal and symbolic center of the city. Located at the southeast corner of Broad and High is the Ohio Statehouse. High Street connects the downtown with The Ohio State University to the north. The first suburbs of the city were along the High Street corridor. At the beginning of the 20th century, when downtown still had a substantial residential population, High Street was filled with stores and hotels. The Lazarus department store on South High Street was a Columbus institution. High Street was the place to be for the people of Columbus.

At this time, the area that would one day be known as the Short North was little more than a suburb of Columbus. The neighborhood to the west of High Street was one of the more affluent in the city. Members of the upper and middle classes inhabited the large Victorian houses. These homes were mainly built of bricks and comprised a very solid housing stock. Some of these stately edifices sat on the border of Goodale Park. Goodale Park was the first city park, given to the city in 1846. The park added to the community feel of the neighborhood, and new construction in the park played on the Victorian theme of the surrounding homes. When the residents of the area were looking to give the neighborhood a name in the 1970s, they drew inspiration from the unique architecture, and called the place Victorian Village.

Some of the people who worked in those houses and in the industrial facilities on the near northside, such as Jeffery Manufacturing on 4th Street lived to the east of High Street. The intersection of Warren Street and 4th Street was the red light district for the wealthy men of

downtown Columbus at the turn of the century (Tar interview). Although not as wealthy as its counterpart to the west, this area was still thought of quite highly at this time. The neighborhood had a large Italian population for a number of years, and one remnant of that past is the church of St. John the Baptist. The homes on the east side of High Street were much more modest than those to the west, reflecting the differences between the inhabitants of the two neighborhoods. There were a number of brick structures as was the case on the west side, however, there were substantially more wooden frame structures built in this area in the early years of the 20th century. The history of Italian residency in the neighborhood, the church, and the “Italian” style of architecture led the leaders of the neighborhood to name it Italian Village in the 1970s (IVS XII, iv).

The neighborhoods kept their status as quality places to live until World War Two. After the war, there were substantial changes in the neighborhoods. As was the case around the country, Columbus went through a process of suburbanization. Members of the upper and middle classes abandoned their historical neighborhoods and moved to the new communities on the fringes of Columbus. Those who had lived in the mansions of the near northside moved to Bexley, Upper Arlington and Worthington. The large mansions were then converted into multi-family properties in order to allow the greatest number of inhabitants. On the other side of High Street, a similar story could be told. The neighborhood was filled with a mix of lower middle income and low-income families. Many of these people worked in the factories in the city. The High Street strip had lost much of its previous luster and the businesses dealt with the mundane details of daily life.

However, during the 1950s and 1960s, the neighborhoods suffered from a lack of investment, and the businesses on High Street gradually shifted focus and abandoned the area as

the neighborhood conditions deteriorated. By the early 1970s, the area just north of downtown had fallen into disrepair and was closing in on blight. The High Street business area had many vacant storefronts and many of those that were occupied housed seedy bars. Parents driving down High Street instructed their children to “roll up your windows and don’t make eye contact.” The area was nothing more than an eyesore between campus and downtown to many of those who did not live in the area.

III. Setting the stage for gentrification

Neighborhoods in general are ever evolving entities with changing houses and households. Starting in the 1960s, cities all over the nation, including Columbus, Ohio, experienced a shift in some urban neighborhoods. Inner city neighborhoods, which had fallen into a state of disrepair, slowly transformed into thriving healthy communities. A group of people, commonly known as “urban pioneers” moved into these dilapidated neighborhoods, purchasing rundown homes at very low costs. Those who moved in were generally young professionals, well educated, a mix of straight and gay couples (Allen interview). They did not yet have high incomes, but with high education levels and white-collar employment, there was the potential to move to a high-income bracket. These people then invested time and money in the renovation of their new homes and in the neighborhood at large. As more and more members of the middle class moved into the neighborhood and purchased and renovated the housing stock, the neighborhood changed. The prior residents of the neighborhood, those who lived there immediately before the influx of the middle class renovators, often saw the new comers accruing almost all the gains from the improvements in the neighborhood. As the value of the properties

increased the current residents become former residents. This process by which the middle class moves in and changes a deteriorated neighborhood is known as gentrification, and it was during this decade that the gentrification process began in the Short North.

Gentrification is a very complex and complicated process involving numerous aspects of the affected neighborhood. The inhabitants, those living there already and those moving in, local business and industry, and governmental agencies all exert influence on the changing area. These actors do not perform in a vacuum. The areas in which gentrification have occurred possess a number of commonalities. These conditions existed all over the nation; however, while some places experienced gentrification, others did not.

Neil Smith explains the restructuring the urban space necessary for gentrification in his essay, “Gentrification, the frontier, and the restructuring of urban space.” The first condition necessary for this restructuring is “suburbanization and the emergence of the rent gap.” This process of suburbanization involves a flight of capital and people out of the city and into the surrounding suburbs. As previously mentioned, this flight from the city was going on in the examined area in the 1950s. The flight from the city pulls away investment and puts urban neighborhoods in a somewhat depressed state. As the property values in the suburbs increase, the urban property has less investment and becomes undervalued. This condition sets the stage for renewed investment in the urban neighborhoods by wealthier individuals and families at a later point.

The second condition Smith cites is “deindustrialization and the growth of white-collar economy.” Deindustrialization changes the employment opportunities for a neighborhood. As industrial and manufacturing employment relocates to the suburbs and other neighborhoods, the inhabitants of the neighborhood are forced to move with the jobs or shift occupations.

Furthermore, the growth of a white-collar economy in the neighborhood and the surrounding area provides incentive to white-collar employees to move closer to their jobs and invest in the neighborhood. Changing employment opportunities can result in an altered population and changes in the businesses that support the community. Although the Short North had many industrial workers, it was not an industrial center. However, as downtown Columbus changed in the 1970s, with the addition of new offices and businesses, there were relatively more white-collar jobs in close proximity to the neighborhood than in years past.

The next condition is “the spatial centralization and simultaneous decentralization of capital.” This is one of the more complicated conditions Smith puts forth. In the capitalistic society, capital has become more and more centralized in the hands of a relatively small number of corporations and individuals. This condition is apparent in the city at large rather than at the smaller neighborhood level. With this centralization/decentralization, industry moves into the suburbs, and some white-collar jobs move away from the center of the city too. Improvements in telecommunications, allow information to quickly move from place to place, eliminating the need to have every piece of data at one’s fingertips, and make these movements possible. Low level jobs such as clerical work, filing, payroll and other non-decision making jobs can be sent to the suburbs. So as businesses decentralize their capital they spread different aspects of their businesses to locations where rent and land is cheapest. However, the main decision making parts of these corporations remain centralized in the inner city. Therefore menial white-collar jobs are located in different areas than the more powerful and important jobs located in the center of the city. Once again, this distribution of employment has a potential impact on urban neighborhoods.

“The falling rate of profit and the cyclical movement of capital” is another condition needed for gentrification to occur. The cyclical movement of capital from inner city to suburb creates parts of the city that are in disrepair and suffered from disinvestment. However, when the cycle of capital shifts back to that area, capital flows back into the region and the neighborhood can improve.

“Demographic changes and consumption patterns” are the final conditions put forward by Smith, although this affects the “form” of gentrification rather than the occurrence of change. Depending on which group moves into the improving neighborhood, growth will follow a different course. Different populations have different tastes, and neighborhood businesses will change and cater to those tastes.

In order to better examine gentrification and these neighborhoods, it is important to clarify the definition being used. Fortunately, Lance Freeman, of the Columbia University Urban Planning Program, picks out some of the common themes of a number of different definitions of gentrification in “Displacement or Succession? Residential Mobility in Gentrifying Neighborhoods.” First, one must examine the neighborhood prior to change. The neighborhood is a “(1) central city neighborhood (2) populated by low-income households that have previously experienced (3) disinvestment.” Secondly, there are the affects of gentrification: “an (4) influx of the relatively affluent or gentry, and (5) an increase in investment” (7). These affects will be further examined at a later point, but it is important to go through a description of the neighborhood prior to gentrification.

Proving that first part of the definition holds is quite simple. The Short North is located a mile from Broad and High. It is almost dead center in the middle of the city. This is an urban environment and a central city neighborhood, thus gentrification can occur.

To get a sense of the income level of the neighborhood, the author, like Freeman, chose to examine neighborhood median income in comparison to the city at large. The table below shows this disparity between the median income in the neighborhood and the city as a whole. The evident disparity between the two in 1960 deepens by 1970. The trend continues through 1980 although the measure, due to census reporting, is now Median Household income. Comparison between the decades is difficult since median family incomes tend to be higher than median household incomes. The term “household” includes single residents with only one income, whereas, a single person does not constitute a “family.” It is reasonable to assume that the pooled income of a family will tend to be higher than that of a household that may include only one person. Thus, the single income households will pull down the Median Income: Household.

	Year	Columbus	Tract 20	Tract 21	Tract 22
Median Income: Family	1960	5982	4711	4256	4631
Median Income: Family	1970	10582	5574	6018	6906
Median Income: Household	1980	14834	10726	7380	5700

Disinvestment is a much harder subject to quantify, as Freeman points out. In order to give some statistic for disinvestment, Freeman looks at neighborhoods that have not had recent renewal of the housing stock. This implies that there has not been interest in major neighborhood improvement. On the west side of the High Street, there is clearly not much new construction, and on the east, there is some by 1970, but this rate is still well below the city rate. Therefore, the new construction must be taking place in other parts of the city where investment is more attractive.

	Year	Columbus	Tract 20	Tract 21	Tract 22
% Housing stock 20 years and younger	1960	37.5	3.4	2	3.7
% Housing stock 20 years and younger	1970	48.3	5.1	6.3	23.2

The total populations of census tracts 20, 21, and 22 in 1970 were 5879, 2343, and 3129 respectively. While the city at large had grown in population from the 1960 census by a margin of 14.5%, these figures represented declines of 20.6%, 30.7%, and 19% in the three tracts. People fled the area at a substantial rate during the 1960s.



All three tracts were predominantly white, although there were significant African-American populations in tracts 20 and 22, and only tract 22 had a higher percentage of African-Americans than the city at large. Less than 4% of the entire population of these tracts had a

college degree, and the percentage with high school diplomas was less than half the city figure.

The median education attained was more than two years less than the median for the city. Of the housing units in these tracts, the vast majority were renter occupied, at a rate twice that of

Columbus. Not only that, most structures had more

	Year	Columbus	Tract 20	Tract 21	Tract 22
Renter occupied %	1960	45.3	67.8	80.3	67.1
Renter occupied %	1970	35.5	73.2	80.3	74.2

than one housing unit. In the case of Victorian Village, many of the old Victorian homes had been converted into multi-family structures. It was not uncommon to find single-family homes from the turn of the century turned into duplexes. Few people owned their own homes, with the highest percentage being 20.1 in tract 22. The median property value for those homes that were owner-occupied was much lower than the city median with the exception of tract 21. However, this tract had so few owner occupied homes included in the measure that the figure is not very meaningful. Both the mean and median family incomes for all three tracts fell within 50% to 75% of the city numbers. The people in this area were not as well off as others in the city.

This is further exemplified by the poverty statistics. The overall poverty rate for Columbus according to the 1970 census was 9.8% of families. However, the poverty rates for these three tracts were 31.8, 19.9, and 20.2, indicating that these neighborhoods had a much greater share of families in poverty than the rest of the city. This lower income is to be expected when one examines the occupations of the people in these tracts. The rate of employment as laborers, operatives, service workers, craftsmen, and foremen was significantly higher than the city at large, whereas the city surpassed the neighborhoods in terms of rate of employment of managers, clerical workers, and salespeople.

The above statistics point to a neighborhood without much going for it; however, these conditions set the stage for gentrification. Furthermore, there were two major factors that held the potential to entice new residents into the area: location and housing stock. In the 1970s, Columbus, already the center of state government, was becoming a focus of business as well. Nationwide Insurance built its international headquarters just a few blocks north of Broad and High. Downtown Columbus was home to many white-collar jobs, governmental and otherwise. The proximity of Victorian Village and Italian Village to the downtown employment centers was a major drawing point for the area. More white-collar jobs could be found a few blocks north of the neighborhood at The Ohio State University. The neighborhood offered a location close to the university facilities for both students and faculty. Furthermore, the housing stock of the area, although not in the best of shape at the time, retained much of its old-world charm, particularly in Victorian Village. Houses such as the “Circus House” (below) on the corner of Buttles and Dennison drew in young people, both straight and gay, who were looking for a challenge.



The mix of low cost housing stock, with a high potential for renovation and restoration, a location in close proximity to downtown Columbus and Ohio State, growing neighborhood

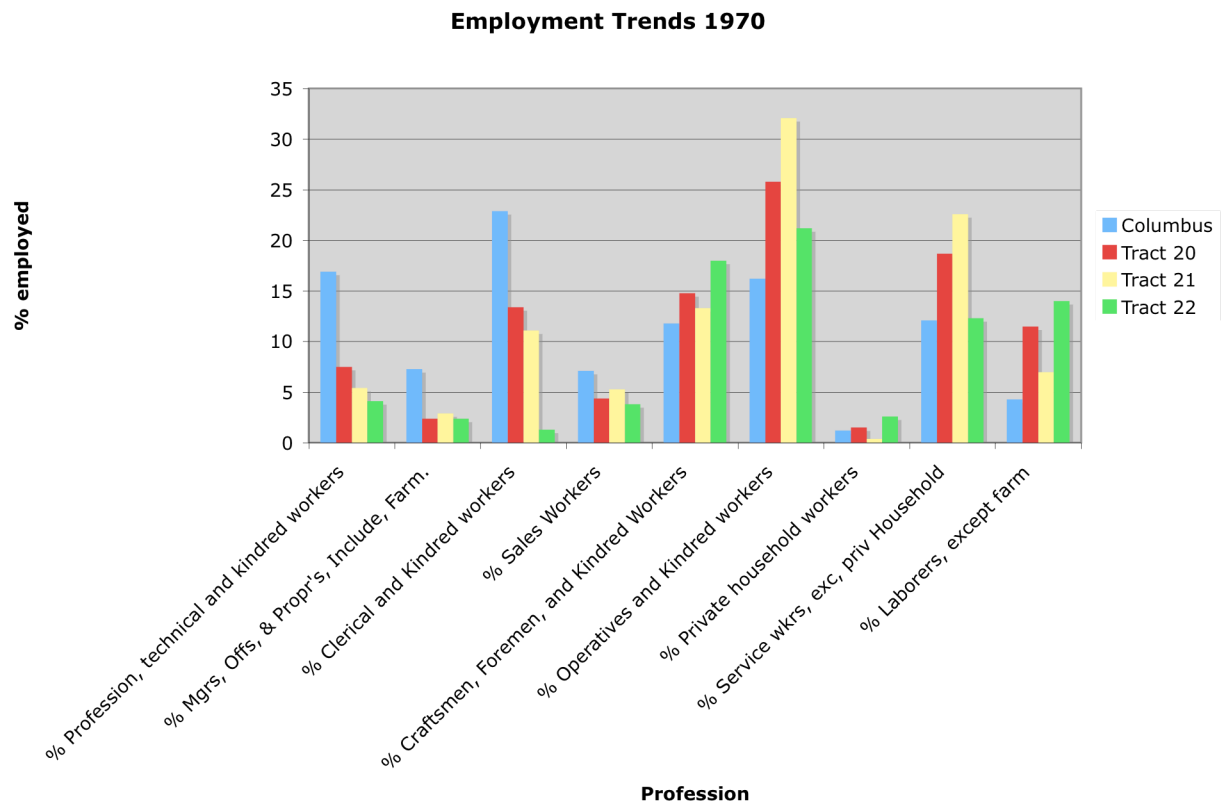
involvement, and a potential challenge provided a few people with enough incentive to move into the area and do what they could to clean it up.

IV. The 1970s

In 1972, under the leadership of Gil Ricketts and Jo Ann Dennison, the Second Avenue Section of the Near Northside Neighborhood Council renamed itself the Italian Village Society and its neighborhood Italian Village. Italian Village is roughly contained by High Street on the west, Fourth Street on the east, Fifth Avenue on the north, and I-670 on the south. Again, in order to get a picture of the neighborhood, census tract 22 will be used, but it must be noted that the tract contains a portion of Columbus to the east of Fourth Street that is not considered part of Italian Village, and leaves out the southernmost and northernmost portions of the Village. This is by no means a homogenous tract and there are huge differences between the southwest corner of the tract near High Street and the northeast corner blocks beyond 4th Street. Even driving around the tract today, one can see that the physical improvements in this tract have been concentrated in the areas closest to High Street. The 1970 population of 3129, had a more diverse makeup than on the other side of High Street, with about 21.7 of the resident claiming “Black” and another .9% claiming “other.” In some respects this tract had advantages over the Victorian Village tracts. The residents of tract 22 had a median income almost \$900 greater and an owner-occupancy rate of 20.1. This tract also had a much higher percentage of long terms residents, residents who had lived in their homes for more than ten years. Over a quarter of the tract

residents were long-term residents, whereas less than 14% of the residents of tract 21 could claim the same distinction.

To balance these positives, the tract did have some deficiencies when compared to the other side of High Street. Although there was more owner-occupied housing, the median value of these units was lower. Even using the median of 9400 from tract 20 instead of the inflated 15800 from tract 21, the tract 22 median of 8600 is significantly smaller. The population of the Italian Village tract was less educated, with a median schooling level almost three years below the city median of 12.2 years. The employment statistics of Italian Village followed the pattern of the entire area, but to a greater degree. In every category of occupations, with the exception of “Operatives” and “Service Workers,” the disparity between the rate in tract 22 compared to the city at large was greater than that of the other two tracts. In those cases where there were



disproportionately few residents employed in certain occupations, an even smaller percentage was to be found in tract 22, and the same held for those occupations with overrepresentation. However, in regard to poverty, tracts 21 and 22 had rates roughly equivalent but still twice that of the city overall.

There are two more things that must be considered in regard to the initial conditions of Italian Village, especially looking back and seeing that the process of gentrification was slower in Italian Village than in Victorian Village. First of all, Italian Village had a different breed of housing stock than Victorian Village. Victorian Village had distinct Victorian houses from the turn of the century; only about 6.3% of the structures in tract 21 had been built in the past twenty years. In tract 22, however, over 19% of the structures had been built in the past FIVE YEARS. This construction could be considered a positive, but it detracts from the historical integrity and unity of the remaining structures. Furthermore, this construction was Section 8, low income housing, and the middle class tends to avoid neighborhoods with this type of housing. However, as pointed out earlier, it is possible that this new construction could have been in the parts of the tract not associated with Italian Village. The second major difference between the two Villages is that Victorian Village contains Goodale Park. At the time, the park was yet another unsafe part of the neighborhood, but thinking in terms of potential draws for the middle class the park fits the bill. A park gives people another place for social interaction and relaxation. However, the park must be taken care of and protected to keep it from becoming a place to be avoided (Jacobs Chap 5). Goodale Park had once been a major part of life in the area, and properly renovated and cared for it could be neighborhood meeting place and cultural center once again. The life and vegetation of a clean and safe park could be yet another drawing point for Victorian Village as it did in fact become. Italian Village did not have parks until the 1980s, and none

even approached the magnitude of Goodale. The community cared for these small parks, but they suffered from vandalism, theft and unsafe conditions. These parks came about later in the life of the neighborhoods, and therefore did provide the same impetus for growth and improvement that did Goodale Park. These two differences were factors that could have heavily influenced the more rapid development of Victorian Village in comparison to Italian Village.

One of the major positive steps taken in the 1970s was the creation of the neighborhood commissions and the architectural review boards. Italian Village, which had been one of Columbus's first suburbs in the 1800s, had fallen into a terrible state of disrepair by the 1970s. The neighborhood had reached such a decrepit state that "letters to the Department of Housing and Urban Development dated June 14 and 15, 1972... signed by then- mayor Tom Moody, Development Department Director N. Jack Huddle and members of City Council, designated parts of the once-thriving neighborhood as 'clearance areas,' where buildings would be torn down and low- to moderate-income housing would be built" (Eichenberger). Ricketts and his neighbors worked on a proposal to make Italian Village a commission area similar to that of German Village. Such a designation would create "a geographic area recognized and empowered by City Council to make recommendations on neighborhood issues" (Eichenberger). Once City Council approved the proposal, Ricketts used his experience to help Victorian Village achieve the same results.

In 1973, the city of Columbus passed Chapter 3331 of the Columbus City code designating the Victorian Village an historic district. The official boundaries of the neighborhood are High Street to the east, Harrison Avenue and Neil Avenue on the west, Fifth Avenue on the North and Goodale Avenue to the south. However, now, with the success of the area, blocks to the north and west of the official Victorian Village have piggybacked on the term

Victorian Village to take advantage of its popularity. Along with this designation of “historic district” came the Victorian Village Commission in 1973. The Commission is a nine-member group, appointed by the Mayor of Columbus responsible for making decisions as to the appropriateness of potential construction and exterior renovation in the neighborhood. The Victorian Village Society, the local neighborhood association, makes suggestions to the Mayor as to potential candidates for the Commission (VVS VII,viii). The Architectural Review Commission plays an important role in the life of the buildings in the neighborhood. As is the case with German Village (the first historic neighborhood in Columbus, located about one mile south of Broad and High just to the east of High Street), in order to make any sort of external changes to the historic buildings of Victorian Village, the owner must petition the Commissioners. It is city law that if one wishes to make an external repair or renovation to a property in the area, the owner must first obtain a “Certificate of Appropriateness” from the Architectural Commission. If the Commissioners feel that the petition does not mesh with the overall style of the building or the neighborhood, they can reject the proposal. In that case, the owner must either give up the renovation or repair, or else change the plans so that they are more in compliance with the wishes of the Commissioners. This oversight extends not just to major remodeling to the Victorian homes the fill the neighborhood; it covers everything from the shape of a porch to the color of the front door.

According to the Victorian Village Society, “the Victorian Village Commission maintains the desirability, the architectural integrity and the growth in property values that accompany such a rare and irreplaceable portion of our architectural history.” At first glance this appears to be a very favorable goal. Homeowners who had invested in the area, partly due to its appeal as an area with historic architecture, wanted to protect that investment as

much as possible. If the neighborhood were to lose its distinctive character due to an influx of cookie cutter homes with no architectural or historic significance, then their investments would suffer. Those who were moving into the area probably had knowledge of the success of the German Village Commission that maintained the architectural integrity of that neighborhood. With that model in mind, and the historic housing stock an architectural commission was the way to go. However, it is important to remember that homeowners were in the minority in the area, and historic preservation adds another cost onto home ownership. In tract 20, the tract that stretches from High Street to Dennison Avenue and from Goodale Avenue to Second Avenue, an area entirely contained by the Victorian Village, the rate of housing stock that was owner occupied was only 7% in the 1970 census, and rose to a mere 8.4% by 1980. A larger percentage of the housing stock was vacant than was owner occupied in this tract. It is possible that the small areas of Victorian Village that do not fall into tract 21 had higher ownership rates. In fact, tract 20 had an owner occupied rate of 16.5% in 1970. However, even with this possibility considered, there is a very small percentage of the population that would have had as much of an incentive to push for the Architectural Review Board, as renters would not have investments to protect and would thus not have the incentive for protection. Therefore, these homeowners must have either had support from local landlords, or else these relative few had sufficient political clout and connections to push for such an organization.

At a basic level, all residents of the neighborhood wanted to improve the quality of life. However, it seems that the incoming residents had the energy and time to try and push for change. The main problem was safety. Safety included a broad range of issues, from street crime to sanitation. Residents, mobilized by their new neighborhood societies and commissions, brought their complaints to the attention of the city, sometimes quite literally. On one occasion,

residents fed up with the lack of sanitation services in the neighborhood, particularly trash pick up took the matter into their own hands. Over one hundred neighbors of Italian Village took their uncollected trash to City Hall and left it at the front door (Eichenberger). The residents of Italian Village and Victorian Village joined together and had found a voice. With their newfound power, they could push for further changes and help from the city government. In order to combat street crime, residents demanded better streetlights to make the sidewalks and roads safer places. As Jane Jacobs says in The Death and Life of Great American Cities, sidewalks are the lifeblood of a neighborhood. They are the meeting places and the common ground that all must share. If criminals and thugs inhabit those sidewalks, then honest citizens and neighbors will be deprived of their use and the neighborhood will lose its cohesiveness and its character. Turning on the lamps is one way to clear the area of those that are afraid of the light. Once City Council saw that these were vital neighborhoods willing to fight to survive, more and more government intervention came to help in the cause.

Residents of these neighborhoods received support from the government in many different forms. One major means of support was low interest loans. One type of loan was a guaranteed second mortgage from the city; this guarantee reduced the risk for banks to offer loans for properties in this area. In Italian Village, the area from I-670 to 2nd Avenue was eligible for low interest loans, requiring only a 3% down payment. For years, community leaders pushed for eligibility for the area from 2nd Avenue to 5th Avenue. The Victorian Village Society made sure that people were aware of potential opportunities by making announcements in the neighborhood newspaper. “The Department of Development is now taking applications for low interest (3%) loans to homeowners in the Victorian Village area” (VVS II, vii,1). These low interest loans facilitated renovations and home improvements.

The first major action of City Council that set the stage for gentrification in Victorian Village and Italian Village was the designation of the two neighborhoods as commission areas. These commissions wielded great power and primarily served the interest of the middle class. They worked to keep the historical integrity of the neighborhood in tact. This extra cost of living in the area could have forced some people who did not want to deal with the additional regulations to move to another part of Columbus. Another of the incredibly important actions of City Council, according to many long-time residents, involved zoning regulations. City Council rezoned most of the two neighborhoods R-4, blanket-zone residential (Allen interview). With a zoning regulation of R-4, the neighborhoods could only be used for residential development. Any commercial uses would need a special exemption from the neighborhood commission in order to open and operate. This regulation ensured that Victorian Village and Italian Village would not develop identically to German Village where commercial and residential properties are mixed together. For example, without the R-4 zoning, an investor would be able to convert one of the beautiful homes on the border of Goodale Park into a restaurant. The restriction kept commercial businesses out of the residential neighborhoods, and they were more or less limited to the High Street Strip, which, at the time had ample open storefronts.

The citizen groups that had pushed for the Commission status of Italian and Victorian Villages stayed together as neighborhood Societies. The Victorian Village Society was created in 1973 to join together the members of the community in order to form an association able to identify and address problems and potential problems of the neighborhood. The Society has officers, monthly meetings, and a neighborhood newsletter, the Village Vibe. The modern purpose of the Society is to:

- Promote the spirit of neighborliness among residents, businesses and organizations in the neighborhood

- Promote restoration, preservation and maintenance of the historic district
- Represent Victorian Village before governmental bodies on issues affecting the neighborhood and the Near Northside Historic District
- Encourage the development of new businesses in the area
- Strengthen the general welfare and unity among those living in the neighborhood

These are the same goals held by the original members of the Society, however, the challenges faced in the early and mid seventies were far different than those of today. One of the earliest issues of the Victorian Village News implores residents of the neighborhood to “help us talking up our village wherever you go and encourage your friends and neighbors not to take a ‘wait and see attitude” (I.iv, 1). The neighborhood was improving, but it still had many flaws. Crime is a recurrent theme in the newsletter. As neighbors met to discuss neighborhood crime, participants’ cars were vandalized in the parking lot (VVS, II, viii, 5). Litter and trash plagued the neighborhood. To those who lived there, the improvements were slow but steady. It would take years more until the area would become a place that did not need “talking up.” One way that the Victorian Village Society tried to improve the image of the neighborhood, and to show off its unique character, was to offer a tour of homes. In 1975, a few homeowners wanted to show off their renovations to their friends and neighbors and opened their properties to the public. This was the beginning of the Victorian Village Home and Garden Tour. The Tour offered a chance to show off the finished product of hours of hard work, and it also gave people who didn’t live in the neighborhood a reason to come to the area.

As the neighborhoods to the east and west started the process of gentrification, it became very clear to the residents that the High Street strip was still an area of negative space for the overall neighborhood. The neighborhood societies stepped in and tried to influence the High Street business owners to push for similar commercial improvement to mirror the residential gains. Gil Ricketts used his influence to bring together High Street business leaders to convince

them that they needed “to change the area’s image or face continued depreciation of the commercial strip” (Sheehan). In a bit of foreshadowing, Ricketts “said a name might also be given to the area to make it readily identifiable to the public.” Ricketts had an ambitious plan for the High Street strip. He and other neighborhood leaders wanted to eventually see a bustling commercial area with pedestrian friendly walkways and fountains, but in the short run they just wanted to see the stores clean up their facades and maybe plant some trees along the sidewalks. (Sheehan) However, by the end of the decade, the High Street residential strip had still not come into its own, even with the opening in September of 1980 of the Ohio Center a few blocks south. Yet some of the potential benefits of the new construction were minimized by the construction itself. In the late 1970s, during this construction, High Street was cut in two. Coming from the north, the furthest south on High Street one could reach was Poplar. Since High Street was a dead end, there was very little traffic and very little business. People going downtown who once had to at least drive down this part of High Street now avoided it completely as detours took them to where they wanted to go by other routes. Why should the city or business owners invest in an area that was so cut off from the city? Answer: they didn’t. It wasn’t until the 1980s that High Street began to make serious positive strides.

The 1970s were a time of major changes in the Short North. Neighborhoods now had commissions and societies to help improve the area, and these groups extended their influence to try and improve High Street as well. By the end of the decade, things were looking good for Victorian Village; it had been named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. Its reputation had even spread to New York City where a company bulletin board suggested “that Victorian Village would be a nice area for its transferring employees to consider” (VVS, V, vi, 4). Furthermore, the Battelle Memorial Institute had announce in 1977, that they planned to

embark on a revitalization of 50 acres the company owned to the north of Victorian Village. They would fix up the exteriors of buildings, and then sell them first to those who were renting, then to the general public. They believed that this project would encourage those individuals who owned property in the area to renovate as well. They hoped that the federal government would help out with low interest loans so that low and middle income families could afford to stay in the neighborhood, and these funds did eventually come (Dispatch 10/09/1977). In 1989, WOSU's magazine, Airfare, credited Battelle with the improvement in the residential neighborhood to the west of High Street, even though they were a latecomer to the process. Rebecca Kuhlman, a past President of the Victorian Village Society spoke out against this misplacement of credit, pointing out that Battelle had originally purchased the properties to expand its facilities. She also pointed out that as Battelle began this process of renovation, they were involved in a legal fight over if owning those properties violated the last wishes of Gorgon Battelle. Regardless, the extended neighborhood was moving toward major changes in the makeup of the population and the census statistics supported that fact.

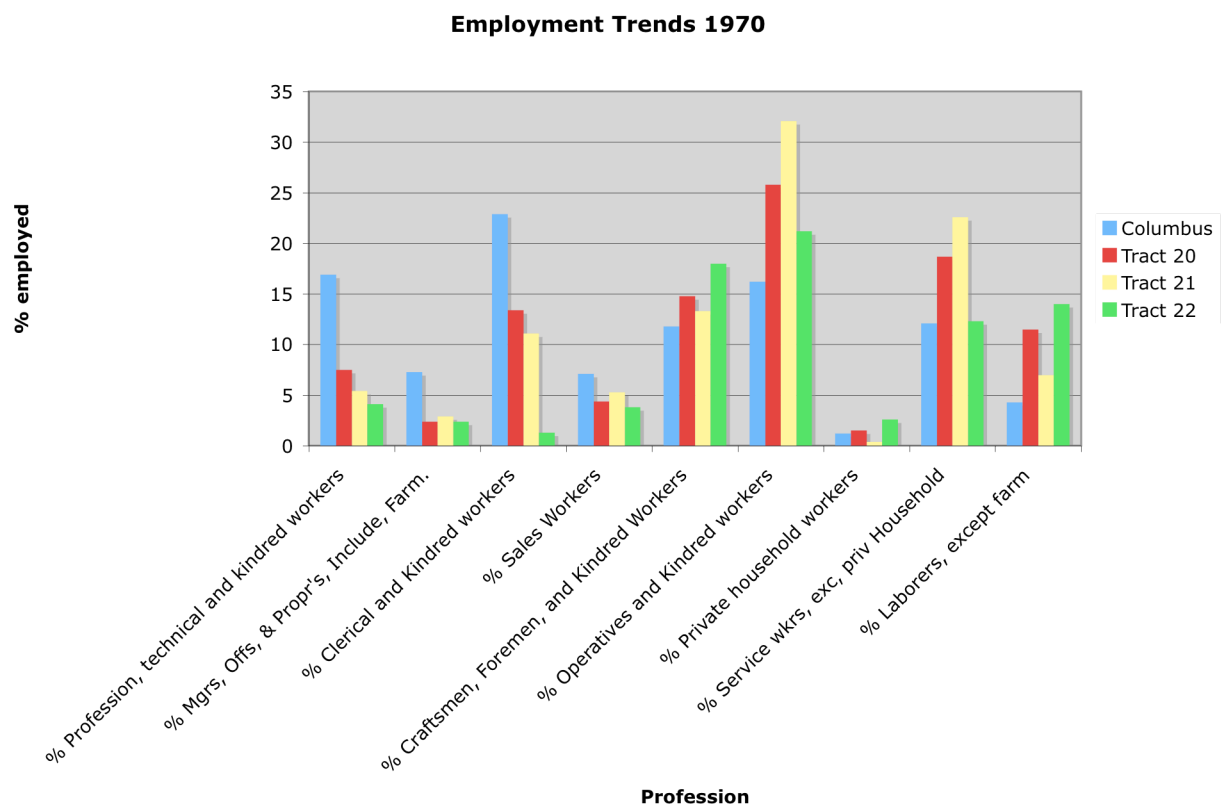
The neighborhoods were changing, but Victorian Village made far more gains in terms of education, employment, income, and property values than did Italian Village. In terms of gentrification, Victorian Village had started the process in the 1970s while Italian Village had stayed more constant. Both neighborhoods experienced substantial declines in population (-27.2% in Victorian Village, -26.3% in Italian Village, see graph earlier). Normally, declines in population are evidence for a floundering neighborhood. Yet in this case, the declining population does not tell the entire story. By 1980, Victorian Village and Italian Village had huge turnovers in population, over 80% of the population had not lived in their current home in 1970, but Italian Village had a more stable make up of the population. The newcomers to tract 22

seem to have mirrored to older inhabitants as much as those of tract 21 differed from the former residents. Educationally, the residents of Italian Village stayed at about the same levels of attainment as they had had in 1970. There were some increase, but these increases were less than the overall city rate. The increase of high school graduates was only 5.1 percentage points, well below the city rate. As shown by the table below, the managerial and technical occupations are still underrepresented in this tract. To further illustrate the growing disparity, the NOMINAL median income fell about \$1200. That is the number of dollars brought in declined; thus in terms of real income, the decline was even greater. The owner-occupancy rates also fell in Italian Village, slightly more than the citywide rate, and the median value increased significantly less than Victorian Village or the City of Columbus. The residents of the neighborhood prided themselves that they worked to keep a mix of families, however, it seems that that effort, combined with the superior housing stock and overall environment of Victorian Village, created a situation where potential gentrifiers chose to move into Victorian Village rather than Italian Village.

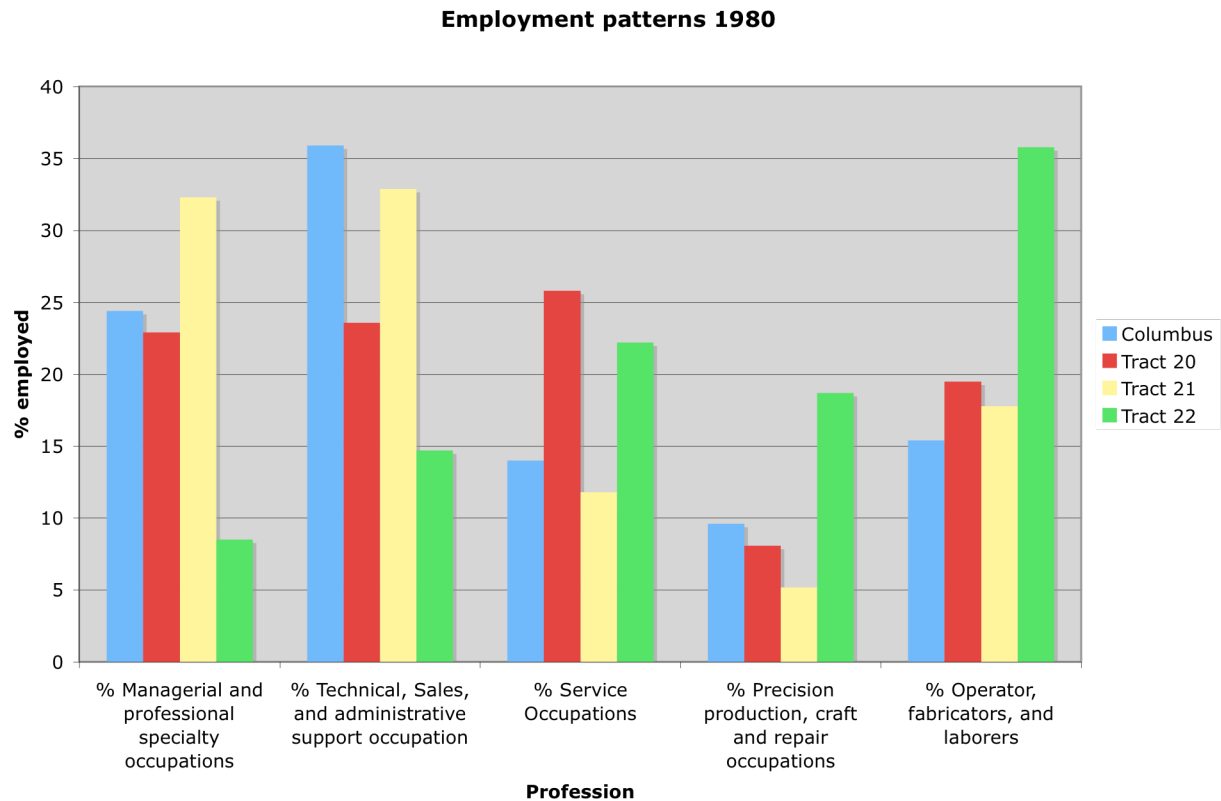
One of the most noticeable statistical changes between the 1970 census and the 1980 census is the educational attainment of residents of Victorian Village. 19.1% of the area residents had a college degree compared to 5% ten years before. In comparison, the city rate had gone from 11.4% to 18.6%. Tract 21 still lagged behind the city in other educational attainment levels, but the magnitude of growth in the tract dwarfed that of the city. The percentage of residents with a high school diploma was 21.9 points higher than in 1980, whereas the city rate of growth was only 13.3. There were significant declines in the number of people reporting their highest educational level attained were grades 5-7 (-164), grade 8 (-79), some high school (-72), and high school diploma (-61). However, these declines were countered by major gains in the

number of people reporting their highest educational level attained were some college (+97), and a college degree (+154). As the number of people in the tract declined, those who left tended to be the less educated, and those that remained and those that moved in or were the ones with the most education.

As could be expected, the rise in educational attainment coincided with changes in the professions of the residents. The occupations that had had the greatest disparity with overall



city rates, such as managers, professionals, and clerical work, now employed the majority of the neighborhood. Those jobs that had dominated in the past saw their importance decline. Overall city employment patterns had also changed, but the rate of change was greater in this area. The rate of owner-occupancy rose slightly, but the median value of such homes soared. The figure, that had been just below the city wide median, was 150% that of the city median value in 1980.



Yet for all the gains of Victorian Village, Italian Village and the still unnamed High Street commercial strip were not showing the same signs of growth.

V. The 1980s

The 1970s was the time that the residential neighborhoods of the Short North began to gentrify, but it was in the 1980s that the High Street commercial strip took center stage of the gentrification process. As previously stated, High Street did not make many strides in the 1970s, but the 1980s were a completely different story. During the 80s, the High Street commercial strip came into its own. The strip found its image and a name by which it was known throughout the city: the Short North. The first time the Victorian Village News mentioned the term

“Short North,” in the summer of 1981, it was in reference to the Short North Tavern, a bar opened on High Street by John Allen in 1981. Mr. Allen got the name of the bar from a police slang term referring to the area. Since “near northside” identified more than just the High Street area, police needed a way to refer to the strip where they encountered so many problems with drugs and prostitution. Hence, they created the term “Short North,” and the local thugs picked up the term with a sense of pride. However, it was not until the bar opened that “Short North” came into the general lexicon. The Short North Tavern was supposed to be a neighborhood meeting place. There were a number of bars in the area, but none had a character that appealed to the middle class clientele moving into the surrounding residential area. Mr. Allen himself had been one of the first to move in as part of this new wave in 1974. However, even living so close to High Street, he had never realized the extent to which “High Street was one rough ass place.” Only six months before he bought the space that would house his bar, a patron of the previous business had been murdered in the bathroom. The Short North Tavern was to be a new type of bar, but it was still a bar. To outside observers, there was nothing new about the bar or the High Street strip. It still lacked an image, and that is where the galleries come in.

The oldest gallery still left from this initial period of growth is PM Gallery, of Michael and Maria Galloway, at the corner of Buttles and High. There was already a “small cluster” of galleries that enticed the Galloways to move into the area. The High Street strip offered a perfect opportunity for artists. The rents were cheap and the neighborhood presented a major challenge, these qualities are beacons to artists. Rent for the space was \$100 a month, of course there was a reason that the rent was so low. The place had been a laundry mat; there was extensive water damage and holes in the floor and ceiling. No one really wanted to be in the area, it had only recently been reopened to traffic once the convention center was finished and the viaduct over

the innerbelt was reconstructed. The spaces themselves were in very poor condition. Aside from a small handful of new galleries, the neighboring businesses were primarily either bars or strip clubs. The upper floors of these buildings had been ignored since there were no potential tenants and they by came flop houses for the winos and drunks who populated the area (Allen interview). PM Gallery opened in June of 1980 after months of renovation to the space by the Galloways. However, they were about a block and a half north of the few other galleries in the area. It was not until Sandy Wood began buying property and renting to specifically to artists and galleries that the strip truly gained a reputation as an “arts district.”

Mr. Wood rented to artists and galleries for a number of reasons. As already mentioned, the low rent in the area fell into the budget range of artists. Beyond that, artists have been thought to “soften up” a neighborhood. Mr. Wood has started out in the residential neighborhoods, purchasing and renovating houses in the 1970s. In the 1980s, he bought his first High Street property and fixed it up. At that time, it was difficult to entice tenants to come into the area, but Mr. Wood offered very inexpensive rent to galleries in order to lure them to his properties. One of his first tenants was a gallery that had been at the southern end of the High Street commercial strip that relocated to be closer to the other new galleries. Mr. Wood went out to find new tenants, and brought in Spanglar Cummings who would play a large part in the establishment of Gallery Hop. Mr. Wood worked with the business owners to create an identity for the area. He kept his rents low to keep people in the spaces and to draw in more artists and galleries (Wood interview).



Once the area reached a critical mass of galleries, the environment was ripe for the incoming business owners to make their own mark on the street in a unified manner. The business owners had a number of goals they wished to accomplish. They wanted to create an identity for the area, and this is where the idea of an arts district came into play. The gallery owners wanted to mimic the success of arts districts in other cities. These districts were well known in their communities and were easily identifiable to outsiders as well. Part of this identity was in a name. The Short North Tavern had brought the term “Short North” into the public eye, it was a simple, easily remembered phrase and it did a good job of explaining where the area was in relation to the downtown district. The business association at the beginning of the 1980s was called “The Association of Near North Side Businessmen.” John Allen, the proprietor of the



Short North Tavern, successfully lobbied the association to change its name to the Short North Business Association. Other potential names for the area were the HighButt, a reference to the intersection of High and Buttles, ShoNo and NoShoNo, the first a shortening of the Short North and the second a demarcation for the North Short North. Fortunately, “sanity prevailed” and Short North is how the area is known to this day.

However, in some people’s minds, all that this naming had accomplished was identifying a crime-ridden neighborhood. It was very hard to shed the image of a rough dangerous neighborhood, when there still existed confusion over what the area actually was. Even by 1988, there was still confusion as to how to describe the area. The Village Vibe reported, “as far as the media and Victorian Village are concerned, The Sort North area is where you list crime

happening and Victorian Village is where you list everything good happening” (XV, xi, 6). This misplacement of crime continued with the best example being the Short North Posse. The Posse was a local gang located between the Short North and the Ohio State campus. However, the name and the media attention paid to the gang in the early 1990s gave the gallery district of the Short North a black eye.

In the 1980s, there were, and there continue to be, major difference between different parts of the High Street commercial strip. The section south of Buttles was where many of the early businesses moved in, but the area to the north still had more than its fair share of crime, most visibly prostitution. The best way to clear up this confusion was to bring people to the area to experience it first hand.

It was with this goal in mind that the Short North gallery owners decided to arrange their artist show openings on the same night. Operating in this manner allowed the galleries to work together on publicity and in drawing attention to the area. It was the hope that if the galleries could bring people into the area at night and show them the vitality of the commercial strip, then the public would be willing to come into the neighborhood during the day as well. The first successful Gallery Hop was in 1983. Yet, by this time, there was still a great deal of discontinuity in the Short North. Galleries were concentrated in the vicinity of the east side of High Street between Lincoln Street and Buttles Avenue. There were enough galleries to justify unity and a Gallery Hop, but there were lots of holes. In 1985, the Short North experienced its first hugely successful Gallery Hop. A new gallery, Spangler Cummings moved into the area from Pittsburg. This gallery had long participated in coordinated openings with other galleries in its old neighborhood and brought with it an extensive patron list and experience in marketing the Hop. It had been five years since the Galloways had moved in with PM Gallery, and finally that

interesting little stretch of High Street was making an identity of its own. To put into perspective how much this change the individual businesses, the income of PM Gallery tripled once Gallery Hop had achieved a high status, and people came down to the Short North with regularity. In 1986, the Columbus Dispatch profiled the Short North during the holiday season. The article declared the Short North an “initial success.” As proof, the article cited the increased sales of many store-owners including Maria Galloway, who stated that 1986 was the first year in which PM Gallery would turn a profit (Eichenberger).

Although business had never been better, the business owners had a number of concerns. One fear was that the Short North would lose its edge and businesses would move in that would threaten the image of the area. If national chains or the poster stores and cookie stores that populated local malls were to move into the Short North, the area would lose part of that which distinguished it from the shopping malls. Some businesses hoped for more competition and more stores to fill in the still vacant storefronts along the street. While the changing population in the residential neighborhoods was helping most businesses, some, such as Dickson T.V., saw their normal low-income clientele leaving the area. The wealthier middle class individuals who moved in or came down for Gallery Hop were not in the market for second hand televisions, so faced with declining sales and increasing rents, Dickson saw the writing on the wall.

This fear of rising rents was, and continues to be, a common theme with storeowners. Part of what made the Short North such an attractive option for the galleries and artists was its cheap rents. However, now that the artists had softened up the neighborhood, they were already finding themselves faced with the prospect of becoming victims of their own success as property values and rents crept up.

The neighborhood truly had “softened up” since the galleries moved in, however, most of this improvement was concentrated at the southern end of the Short North that was the focus of the galleries. By 1988, “Short North residents and merchants still need[ed] to be careful out there, but the area [was] safer than it used to be, according to a policeman who[d] worked in the area for 21 years.” (Long). For those who had been in the area to witness the changes, the differences were immense. The idea that people from the suburbs and from the wealthier parts of Columbus would come to the Short North after dark and not have to be afraid of being mugged was a novel concept. Officer William Lawson cited “better quality of people,” more police presence in the form of cruisers, and the Columbus curfew law as reasons for the improved safety. The reference to “better quality of people” reflects the idea that the demographic changes in the neighborhood was a positive. The educated, professionals moving into the area were preferred over the less educated people who had lived there before.

While violent crime and major burglaries had declined in the southern Short North, the most visible crime of the area, prostitution, was still going strong. The northern part of the Short North, mainly between First Avenue and Third Avenue, was known as a center of prostitution, primarily child prostitution. A 1985 Dispatch article paints a very bleak picture of the area and the young prostitutes who roam the streets. Children, some as young as 10, walked the streets turning tricks, primarily to earn money to feed drug addictions. The young prostitutes are mainly runaways, according to one officer “every runaway in the Midwest knows about N. High St.” (Yocum). These children, some of whom had families in the area, did not see anything wrong with what they were doing. It was simply another way to make a living. Young prostitutes, both male and female catered to a mainly male clientele, either in motel rooms, or else in cars parked in the alleys of the Short North (Yocum). Clearly, this was not the type of image that the

business owners further to the south wanted associated with the name Short North. It took a long time to clean up the image further south, and it was becoming more important to make sure that the entire area that bore the name improved to a similar extent as to that to the south. At this time, the AIDS epidemic had not yet come to attention of the public, and so the youths were making life or death decisions without fully understanding the situation.

The neighbors of the area were not simply going to allow these crimes to occur on their streets without putting up a fight. Storeowners told prostitutes to leave their storefronts, and a group of dedicated individuals took matters into their own hands. These people watched the streets and wrote down the license plate information for the suburban “johns” coming into the neighborhoods. With this information, the group would then send letters to the men, informing them that they had been caught. They did this with the hope that the shame of being caught would deter patrons of the prostitutes from repeating their business in the neighborhood (Berens).

The 1980s were years of great change in the commercial district, and in 1987, Columbus, and more specifically the Short North, was named an All-America City by the National Civic League to recognize the positive growth the city and neighborhood had experienced. The All-America City award is the oldest in the country and recognizes “communities of all sizes (cities, towns, counties, neighborhoods and regions) in which community members, government, businesses and non-profit organizations work together to address critical local issues.” (National Civic League)

Just as the Short North went through enormous growth and change in the 1980s, the neighborhoods of Italian Village and Victorian Village also changed significantly. The

neighborhoods, especially Victorian Village, consolidated their growth from the previous decade, made more strides to improve and worked to extend their power and influence.

In the 1980s, the resident of Italian Village saw some of the fruits of their efforts of the previous decade. Crime had gone down significantly, and more people were looking to move into the neighborhood. Some people wanted the proximity to jobs downtown and the shops of the Short North. Others were looking to take advantage of the growing popularity of the area. They bought up houses, fixed them up, and then rented them to transient professionals looking for a place to live. On Lincoln Ave. Jack and Zoe Johnstone opened a small bed and breakfast to cater to convention goers and other visitors to the city. There were many changes taking place in the neighborhood, but few young families moved into the area and fixed up the housing, and the major changes were still going on in Victorian Village.

By the early 80s, Victorian Village had been gentrifying for seven or eight years. The neighborhood had made substantial gains in the previous decade, and more were to come in the 80s. The Victorian Village Society had sponsored a picnic and parade for years to celebrate the Fourth of July. The parade featured families and children showing off their patriotism as they walked down the streets of the neighborhood. In the early 80s, the Society managed to get the parade moved to High Street, however, in 1984, the nature of the parade changed. A group of UnOrganizers got together to plan the first DooDah parade for July 4th (rain date July 3rd). The idea was to allow the members of the community to walk around the parade route and do whatever they wanted. They could play musical instruments (poorly), they could mock local issues (wittily), then could just have fun (amusingly). The idea came from a similar parade in Pasadena, California. And much to the surprise and delight of the UnOrganizers, the parade was a big success (Galloway). One of the leaders of the DooDah parade suggested that they

copyright the name, and it proved to be a good move. When Upper Arlington, a suburb of Columbus tried to copy the idea, name and all, the DooDah UnOrganizers sued them. When Upper Arlington ignored a letter to cease and desist, Andy Kline, the attorney who had registered the stolen name fair and square, and Doug Richey, Emperor of the Short North, led the local residents in an invasion of UA just in time for the six o'clock news (Gazette). Short North residents showed up after a short bike ride on the freeway armed to the teeth. They were outfitted with the tools of the renovating trade, caulking guns, glue guns, and staple guns. The display of strength thoroughly confused the residents of Upper Arlington. Upper Arlington eventually relented and decided to have a DD parade instead of DooDah. However, the lawnmower brigade in matching polo shirts did not have the same impact as the makeshift urban lawnmowers of the Short North (Galloway interview). It was this kind of irreverence that gave life and vitality to the neighborhood, but it also is emblematic of just how different the neighborhood was from other areas of the city.

In 1984, the Gallery Hop had not yet gotten off the ground, so people from other parts of Columbus did not have extensive contact with the Short North. People from the suburbs knew the Short North for crime and prostitution, some of them first hand. When they saw something worthwhile coming out of the neighborhood, such as the DooDah parade, rather than going to the area to enjoy it in person, they chose to co-opt the idea and claim it as their own. However, residents of the Short North would not allow this to occur. They were fighting to keep the prostitutes and their clients out of the neighborhood, but if those patrons wanted to come back during the day to enjoy the positives the neighborhood had to offer, they were more than welcome.

In 1989, Friends of Goodale joined with the city to build a gazebo next to the lake in Goodale Park (VVS XVI, xii). The group founded in response to city planning without community involvement was now working with the city to improve the neighborhood jointly. The gazebo could be used for numerous cultural events held in the park. Music in the Air, part of Columbus Recreation and Parks would later use the gazebo for some of its outdoor music programs. The Community Festival, or ComFest, an annual festival of peace and love held since 1972, used the gazebo as one of the performance spaces. The gazebo was used for church services and weddings. It served as a reminder of the people who came before who had worked to clean up the neighborhood and the park.



A miniature train in Goodale Park caused the formation of the Friends of Goodale. In 1984, the City of Columbus wanted to put a train and track in the park. At first glance this seemed to be another in a string of positives for the park and the neighborhood, but the neighbors had some concerns. The local residents questioned the city plan, demanding accountability and answers to their questions. They wanted to know if the sidewalks would be destroyed, how the tracks would be kept clean, who would run the train and during what hours, and how the city planned to keep children out of danger. In order to better fight the proposal the concerned citizens formed the Friends of Goodale. Faced with such strong opposition, the city eventually abandoned the plan and put the train at the Columbus Zoo where the residents could not complain. (VVS X, vi) This is just another example of how the residents of the Victorian Village were taking an active role in the changes going on around their neighborhood.

The Victorian Village residents worked in the 1970s to improve the safety in the area, and to get the commissions in power. In the 1980s, they made sure that further changes in the area came about in ways that benefited the neighborhood. The Victorian Village Society had input with the High Street Commission set up by the Department of Development to establish a plan for the improvement of High Street. They made sure that the Commission addressed all neighborhood concerns about safety, traffic and parking. The Victorian Village Society and other neighborhood groups in the Short North fought against the proposed demolition of apartments owned by the Greek Orthodox Church at Goodale and High. The Church wanted to tear down buildings that those in the community considered of historic value, and in the end the Greek Orthodox Church had to change its plans, but only to delay the destruction of these buildings (VVS X, iv).

The Victorian Village Society also gave young politicians the opportunity to whet their teeth in the political arena. Local politicians such as Jeff Cabot and Amy Salerno got their starts as members of the Society in the 80s.

In the 1970s, the major changes in Victorian Village revolved around the physical condition of the neighborhood, the housing stock and the city services such as roads and street lights, the changes in the 80s were more intangible. There were still many physical changes, but the attitude of the neighborhood took a firmer shape as well. People came to associate themselves with Victorian Village and the Short North and the things that made the neighborhood unique. Events such as the DooDah Parade, Gallery Hops and ComFest could be found nowhere else in the city. It was important to the people in the neighborhood that the changes and gains they had worked so hard to achieve were continued through into the future. They wanted to keep the neighborhood a fun and friendly place, while fighting the remnants of the older more dangerous neighborhood at the same time. The neighborhood had improved, but these people saw that there was still a long way for it to grow. Crime could be reduced, there could be greater communication and cooperation between the neighborhood and the city, and High Street could fully blossom into an entertainment district for the city.

At the beginning of the 1980s, if one were to ask a random person downtown to identify the Short North, he or she would have given a blank stare. By the end of the decade, most people would be able to identify the area, and many had probably been to a Gallery Hop or two. The Short North was constantly working to improve and change. In 1987, the Citizens for a Better Skyline dedicated the first of the murals that came to grace the sides of many buildings in the Short North. The first mural was a painting of the old Union Station that had been torn down about a decade before. This painting was followed shortly thereafter by trains on the wall

opposite that of Union Station. However, the best known of the murals was painted sideways on the warehouse that housed Reality Theatre: the Mona Lisa. The Short North was known as the area where art was turned on its ear, a reference to the sideways Da Vinci masterpiece. Also in 1987, the city and High Street landlords joined together to plant trees along the street. Looking at the two pictures of High Street above, one of the most obvious differences between the two is the presence of trees. The green of the trees give life to the street and create a more comfortable environment. Although these trees too were victims of crime in the 1980s, they helped change the image of the area. The High Street commercial strip was unrecognizable compared to ten years earlier, and Victorian Village had solidified its gains of the 1970s.



Victorian Village had reached a point where the changes of gentrification over the past twenty years were very clear. Over 55% of the residents of tract 21 had a college degree (30.3% for Columbus) and over 84% had a high school diploma (78.7% for Columbus). To put this in perspective, ten years earlier 55% of the population had at least high school diplomas and only 19.3% had a college degree. The rate of population decrease has slowed to -13.7% over the ten years, while the rate of loss of housing units was at -11.4% over the period. Now this loss of housing stock is not necessarily a bad thing, as more and more houses that had been converted into multi-unit properties were being restored to single-family use. The rate of homeownership declined, but less than the overall city rate of decline, and this could have been offset by the strong growth in homeownership in tract 20. Median family income was still below that of the city, but much closer than it had been ten years ago. And the value of owner occupied housing was still 150% that of the median for the city. Managerial, professional, sales, and technical jobs continued to be the main vocations of people in the area with an even smaller percentage working in labor. Interestingly, with all of these changes, the neighborhood became more diverse. The demographic make up was still overwhelmingly white, but African-Americans made up 5.6% of the population while the biggest gain was of those who classified themselves as neither black nor white. These groups made up the remaining 1.6%, and included Asian Americans and Native Americans.

VI. Since then

Gentrification occurred in this area of Columbus, with unique factors pushing it forward on either side of High Street. Looking at when the changes occur, one can pinpoint when

gentrification showed up in the data of the different tracts. Major changes in the education levels and employment distribution for tracts 20 and 21 occurred by 1980. In contrast, the major changes for tract 22 showed up ten years later in the 1990 data. This suggests that gentrification was not a uniform process even in this small area. Yet gentrification did come to both sides of High Street, it just took a little longer to get to the east side than it did to get to the west. The improvement of the actual High Street strip is more difficult to pinpoint since the area is so small and it is on the border of multiple tracts. It does not show up in the raw data as clearly as the residential neighborhoods do, but the changes on the High Street strip were vitally important to the changes in the overall area.

Just because gentrification had run its course in Victorian Village did not mean that the neighborhood stopped changing. In the 1990s, the area grew in popularity and declined in population as people chose Victorian Village as an alternative to the suburbs. However, those coming in were moving into an already established community, one that had fought in the past for safety and streetlights. The newcomers did not have the same mental investment in the community, as did those who had worked to shape the neighborhood in the 1970s and 1980s. With new inhabitants came new priorities and issues. It is interesting that as one gets closer and closer to the present day in the issues of the Village Vibe, the problems and concerns of the community change dramatically. In the 1970s and 1980s, people were worried about safety. They had community watches and patrols to protect themselves and their neighbors. They worked to improve the safety of the roads and sidewalks with streetlights. They wanted better trash collection to keep the neighborhood free of garbage and sanitary. There were other problems as well, such as traffic and parking, but it was the issues of safety that dominated the discussion. People were interesting in improving the community at large and were willing to

work to make sure that those improvements came about, that attitude seemed to change in the 1990s.

Particularly by the end of the decade, the main complaints in the neighborhood newspaper were about traffic and parking. These were not new problems by any means, but they had never dominated the pages as they did in this period. There were complaints about the widening of I-670. Residents were worried about how their personal traffic pattern would be altered, but they were also concerned about increased traffic through the neighborhood as people tried to avoid the construction. City and county leaders listened to what the neighborhood had to say and was willing to make some concessions. The neighborhood agreed to forgo an expensive soundwall in return for the preservation of historic buildings (Galloway interview). However, the issue that brought out the most complaints was the construction of Nationwide Area, just to the south of the Short North and Victorian Village.

Now that the neighborhood had reached a point of stability, it seems that residents wanted to protect what they had. They were very worried about how a multi-million dollar entertainment complex would affect their peaceful neighborhood. Foremost amongst the concerns were increased traffic on Neil Ave. and potential parking conflicts as people come into the neighborhood to attend events at the arena. It is understandable that people were concerned about the potential dangers of hundreds if not thousands of extra cars on the streets multiple times a week, but the language used made it sound as if *their* neighborhood were being overrun by people up to no good rather than patrons of a newly constructed entertainment district. As important as this traffic issue was, nothing could raise the ire of neighborhood residents, to this day, as much as the issue of parking. People moving into the neighborhood, especially if they came from the suburbs, had not had as much of a problem with parking before. In suburban

communities, it is normal for every house to have a garage and a driveway as well as lots of open on-street space. This is not the case in Victorian Village. Most of the parking in Victorian Village is on-street parking. There are very few garages and the only other option is to park in a back alley if there is room. This did not always sit well with people who expected to be able to walk out their front door and walk straight into their car. To protect the parking of the residents, the city made the entire area permit parking. People who moved into the neighborhood expecting a suburb in the city were not expecting to have to park a block away from their home, nor were they expecting to have to share the urban neighborhood with outsiders who came into the downtown area to take advantage of the entertainment options.

The educational gains continued to make strides, an even greater percentage of the people were employed as managers, professionals and the like, housing values remained high, but something intangible that doesn't show up in the census statistics changed. The original gentrifiers invested more than money in the area. They invested their time, sweat, blood, and tears. They moved into a neighborhood in need of work, expecting to put that work in and change the neighborhood. They wanted to fix up the entire neighborhood and show it off, either through good press or the Home and Garden Tour. On the other hand, the people moving in more recently moved into the finished product of what those that had come before had accomplished. They expected a nice neighborhood when they moved in, and expected that quality to continue. This can be seen in the reactionary responses to new construction and potential parking and traffic. Part of what made the neighborhood thrive in those earlier decades was strong leadership from the neighborhoods and from the business district, as the leaders left, newcomers did not see the need to fill those shoes. One example of this is the 2000 Tour of Homes. After months of pleas for someone to step forward and take leadership of the annual

event, the Victorian Village Society decided to cancel the event due to a lack of leadership. Once the event was threatened in this way, finally someone came forward and seized control and the Tour was back on. (VVS XXXVII, vii)

This lack of leadership is going to be a constant problem as the neighborhood continues to grow in popularity and people move into the area to be where the action is. The renovation has not stopped, and if anything, renovation is even more profitable now than ever. The top floors of the High Street buildings have long been fixed up and turned into condos selling for \$200 to \$300 a square foot (Kirkpatrick). With the recent history of low interest rates, there has been even more growth in the entire Short North area. Victorian Village, which had such an advantage over Italian Village due to its initial higher quality of housing stock, is now being caught by the neighborhood across the way.

Italian Village, according to the census data has been about ten years behind Victorian Village. Educationally, Italian Village experienced major change in 1990 that resembled the major change that occurring in Victorian Village in 1980. Italian Village was still far behind the city educational rate, but it had made up significant ground and had fully recovered by 2000. As stated previously, it could be argued that gentrification had run its course in Victorian Village by the end of the 1980s, but there were still people who were looking for that challenged, and the proximity to Victorian Village and the Short North, made the neighborhood an easy target for more growth. Buildings that had stood empty for years were converted into shops and condos. An empty field on Warren Street was filled in with a new apartment complex. The old wooden jungle gym in the park at the corner of Hubbard and Kerr was torn down and replaced by a shiny new plastic one. The atmosphere was similar to that of Victorian Village a decade before, all around the neighborhood there were new projects and new renovations. When the process first

started, the neighborhood leaders worried that Italian Village would lose its mix of families, and while they saw the beginnings of that in 1987, that process is speeding up as the property becomes more and more valuable. A major project that is in the works for the near future is a complex of condos and commercial ventures on the land that once held the Jeffery manufacturing plant. This construction project will be the most expensive to date in the neighborhood with a price tag around \$200 million. This number amazes some of the local property owners and real estate people who have been in the area for years. In their experience a deal of \$5 million or more was a huge undertaking and a major deal. The \$200 million figure is incomprehensible and almost unbelievable for those who have seen the neighborhood go through its evolution and growth.

However, this new project serves as a perfect symbol for the gentrification of this neighborhood. The Jeffery Company once owned the land and had a large manufacturing facility there. This factory employed many members of the surrounding residential communities, including Italian Village. When the factory closed, the employees either had to find new jobs in the area, or move to where they could. Without the strong business presence in the community, there was not as much investment, and the door was opened to gentrification. The middle class moved in and fixed up some homes, improving the area, and as they did so, property values went up and even more of the poor families had to leave. Eventually it reached a point where the land in the area was just too valuable to go to waste as a barren site of a former factory, and developers swooped in to fix up the vacant lot and build more condos where the people can live, stores where the people can shop, and places where the people can play.

VII. Conclusions

Of the three main geographic areas examined in this paper, the High Street commercial strip has gone through the most visible transformation. Due to its proximity to the downtown business district and the Ohio State Campus, as well as its location on High Street, this area was always in the public eye. In the 70s and early 80s, people would drive through the area without stopping, provided they could even drive through. Then as the galleries took root, the commercial strip changed from a crime ridden blighted area to the bustling Short North. It is still possible to see remnants of the old Short North up around the intersection of High Street and Fifth Avenue. The Garden is a sex and fetish shop, although a classier version than those that used to fill the area. Another landmark of the High Street commercial strip is the Gentleman's club located next to the DeRose barbershop just south of 1st Avenue. In the 1980s this club filled its storefront window with scantily clad women. In the late 1990s, the club shifted clientele and became a storefront with scantily clad men in the window. In 2005, the men of The Full Monty, were replaced by the women of Club Secrets. The strip club has gone through changes, but it survives the changes that have pushed similar business out.

In the 1990s, the galleries gradually inched further and further up High Street. First they filled in most of the commercial area up to Second Avenue. In 1995, a vacant lot at the corner of High and First was converted into a Donatos Pizza, successfully filling in some of the dead space that created discontinuity along High Street. This pizza place is a national chain, but it worked with the neighborhood commission to design a building that meshed with the historic district. Donatos was rewarded by the city for these efforts (Albrecht). The local middle school, Everett, which had fallen onto hard times in the 1990s, was reopened as the home of the Arts Impact Middle School. The school fit perfectly with the surrounding neighborhood, and local galleries

on occasion have special showings of student works. There are still some gaps in the Short North, but in time those too will fill in and visitors will be able to walk the entire length of the strip wandering from shop to shop as they go.

However, there are still concerns about the area. With the great success of the Short North, property values and property taxes are going up, forcing landlords to charge higher and higher rent. The cheap rent was one thing that gave the Short North its cutting edge. With low overhead, small entrepreneurs were able to experiment and open specialty shops that could be found few places else. Stores focusing on all things paper, high-end kitchen supplies, everything to pamper a pet, and general “great things” could all be found in the Short North at one time. As rents get higher, innovation will be much more expensive and stores that close or are forced to leave by the rising rents will be replaced by “safer” projects. These new businesses may be national chains, or similar cookie-cutter stores that while, profitable, detract from the unique character of the Short North. It is important that the Short North remain a cultural and arts district. Recent steps to reinforce this idea include more murals on the walls of buildings, one has the female farmer of Grant Wood’s American Gothic painted upside down, and sponsoring a street art festival every year where artists come to High Street and draw chalk masterpieces on the street. Gallery Hop is as popular as ever, and the DooDah Parade and ComFest are still important city events.

Alas, one glaring flaw in the Short North started with the best of intentions: the arches. Columbus was once known as the City of Arches, and dozens of arches spanned High Street at the turn of the century. In December 2002, construction was completed on a series of lighted arches spanning the Short North. Almost immediately the arches started showing problems. The lights did not all go on at the same time, the bulbs were changing color, and the potential tourist

destination had turned into a multi-million dollar joke. Now, two and a half years later, the lights are still flickering on the arches and nothing has been done. People still think of Gallery Hop and the arts when they think of the Short North, but now they are starting to think of ineptitude and “those stupid arches” as well. There is an important lesson to be taken from these arches. It is good to have big dreams, but it is important to plan ahead so those dreams can come to fruition. And if there is a stumble along the way, it is important that it not be the end of the road, but that the problem is addressed and further progress is made. This requires leadership and understanding, and it is vitally important that this area of Columbus continues to have strong leadership with an understanding of what the community is, what it has been, and where its potential lies. Neighborhoods are constantly changing, but with strong leadership, it is possible to steer that change in a positive direction.

The Short North went through immense changes from the 1970s to the present day. This growth and change was fueled by a grass roots effort of incoming educated professionals, High Street property developers and business owners. Part of what gives this area such a unique character is the bottom up nature of growth. The individual actors put their personal touch on the neighborhood, they were able to respond to conditions in Columbus and create a strong community. They received some help from governmental organizations such as the creation of commissions and low interest loans, but it was up to the individual people and businesses to push the process forward. It is tempting to try to replicate the success of the Short North, but because the growth evolved naturally through individual efforts, it would be difficult for a government to step in and impose changes and achieve the same success.

However, the city could step in to help maintain the character of the neighborhood. If the city were to officially designate the Short North the Arts District of the city, and offer tax

incentives to landlords who rent to artists and galleries, it is possible that the Short North could keep its quirky nature and the galleries will stay in place.

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